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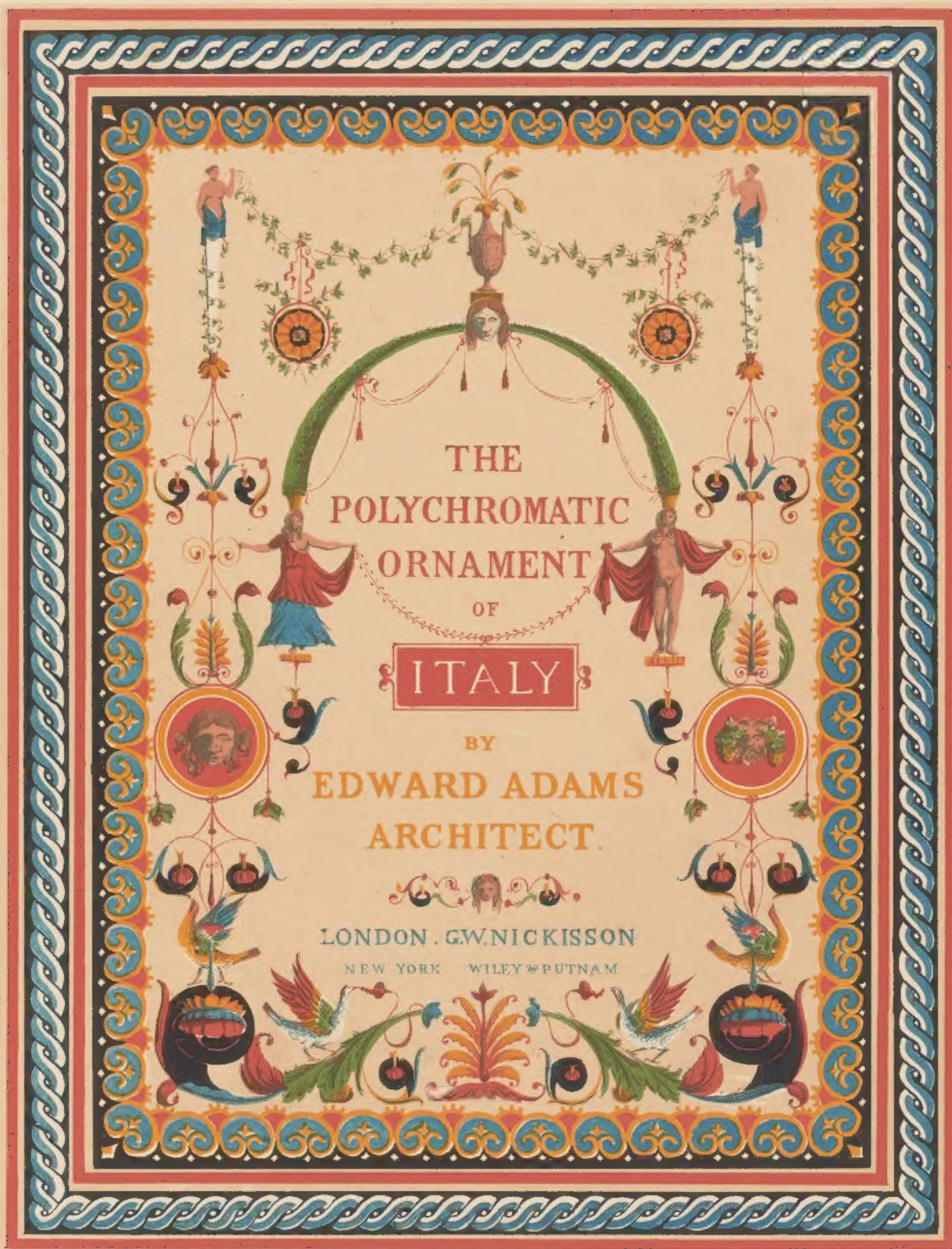
THE
POLYCHROMATIC ORNAMENT
OF
ITALY.

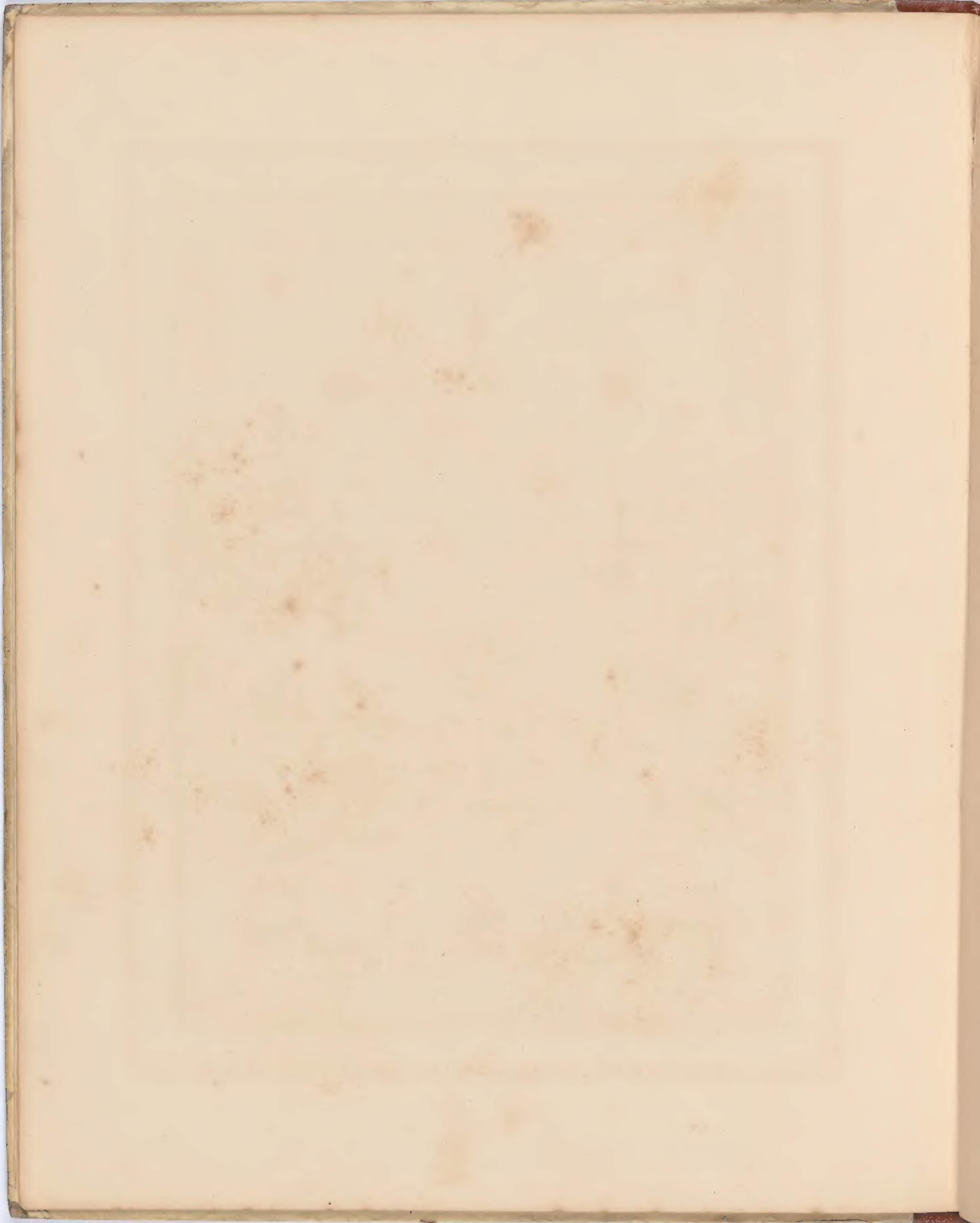
PART I.

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PREFACE.

THE design of this Work is to give a connected illustrated history of the Decorative art in Italy, from the Roman period which we recognise in the present remains of mural decoration in the Baths of Titus, down to the middle of the 16th century, extending over a period of about 1500 years. The present Part illustrates the art at the period of the early part of that century, after the school as it was formed by Raphael upon the models of ancient art.

The Raphaelesque style of Decoration has given rise to much discussion as to its merits, being advocated by some and much censured by others: it is true that from the wide field of fancy which it presents to the artist and without judgment in the employment of its resources, it is liable to degenerate into confusion and extravagance. But the whole of this school of art must not be indiscriminately censured on account of the extravagancies which it has produced from a misapplication of its means. The admiration which has been so justly bestowed on many excellent productions, prove this

branch of art to be capable of beautiful combinations of harmony, both of form and colour.

It is a style well adapted to adorn the interiors of our modern houses; the gracefulness of its forms and the variety of objects which may be introduced into it to give it life, impart to a room an air of cheerfulness and gaiety,—qualities under the climate of this country much to be desired in decoration; a great advantage is, that the Pictorial art accompanies the Decorative: Landscapes or small groups of figures in compartments may be introduced: the figures give a refinement and life to the whole composition, as in a picture they animate a landscape. Lanzi speaking of Marco da Faenza a skilful painter of grotesques, says that none equalled him “in happily adapting to grotesques, little histories full of spirit and elegance, and with figures which form a school for design.”

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A

SKETCH OF THE ORIGIN

OF THE

RAPHAELESQUE STYLE OF DECORATION.

THE Raphaelesque style as we now term it was called the Grotesque* by the Italians of the 16th century, from *grotte*, the word by which they denominated the antique subterranean chambers which about that period were brought to light by clearing them of the *débris* of ruins which had accumulated upon them during a number of ages. On the walls and ceilings of these vaulted chambers and corridors were found the Fresco decorations, the study of which revolutionised in so short a time the Decorative art, and established that style which we recognise in the works of Raphael and his scholars.

When art was divested of the trammels with which it was burdened under the dry, hard style of the Greeks, as may be seen in some of their frescoes but mostly in their mosaics

* I have used the term grotesque (*grottesche*) as it is applied by all the Italian writers on the subject, not only to the Raphaelesque, but to that style which, preceding it, was formed upon the study of antiquities.

throughout the many early churches existing in Italy, mosaics fell into disuse and the more plastic materials of fresco took their place. This change was brought about by some Italian artists previous to the time of Cimabue, but to the genius of that great man must be conceded the honour of bringing fresco painting to that degree of perfection which we admire in so many of his works. Still, after the more general introduction of fresco painting, mural decoration continued to be a copy of the forms of the old Greek ornament as for instance, in S. Francesco di Assisi and in many other churches, we see copied in fresco even the old geometrical mosaics on the groins of the ceilings. But the forms of the foliage underwent a great amelioration, it became much more elegant and flowing in its outline, a result which the more tractable nature of the materials tended to effect. From this time up to the period when the architectural remains of antiquity began to be studied, no materially new element found its way into the art of decoration. The Grotesque style was first introduced some time after the middle of the 15th century. This change happening at the time when art was approaching towards its climax of excellence, took its rise from the study of the remains of antiquity, both of architecture and of sculpture, with which Rome and many other parts of Italy abounded. These new materials for decoration were obtained chiefly from sculptured architectural ornaments, such as the foliage adorning the friezes of temples intermixed with human figures terminating in foliage, armour, military trophies, standards and helmets, &c. A combination of these materials in decoration was called Grotesque, as were also the antique mural decorations before-mentioned. Gro-

tesques were first applied to ornament pictures. It is uncertain what artist first introduced them; Lanzi says that Vasari attributes to Filippino Lippi, who flourished towards the latter end of the 15th century, the credit of having first decorated modern paintings with grotesques copied from the models of antiquity:* but as a note in the life of F. Lippi by Vasari intimates, he says merely that he designed them in a better style and executed them with more elegance than the artists before his time.† At the end of the 15th century there were many painters who cultivated the art of grotesque decoration with great success. Amongst these the most celebrated was Pinturicchio a pupil of Pietro Perugino; one of his latest works is the frescoes which he painted for Cardinal Francesco Piccolomini in the sacristy of the Cathedral of Siena, illustrating scenes from the life of Pius II.; in this work which was finished in 1503-4, he was assisted by Raphael. His earlier works at Rome were done for Innocent VIII. and for Alexander VI., in the Appartamento Borgia in the Vatican palace. Vasari says that in the latter work he introduced stuccoes after the manner of the antiques, but the mode of working and compounding the plaster not being then known, they failed and were in a bad state in his time. In all his decorations he used a great deal of gold. The decoration of the choir of Santa Maria del Popolo at Rome is one of his most beautiful works; at the angles of the ceiling are represented the

* "History of Painting," by Lanzi, translated by Roscoe, Vol. I. p. 93. Lond. 1828.

† "Fu primo ancora a dar luce alle grottesche che somigliano l'antiche, e le mise in opera di terretta e colorite in fregi con più disegno e grazia che gl'innanzi a lui fatto non avevano."—*Le Opere di Gio. Vasari*, Firenze, 1832-38, Vol. I. p. 404.

four Evangelists. Benedetto Bonfigli was one of the early masters who painted grotesques; though much older than Pinturicchio, he was his companion in many of his works; he painted with him the grotesques in the apartment of Innocent VIII., but they were not in existence when Lanzi wrote. Pietro Perugino about the year 1500 painted some beautiful grotesques in the Sala del Cambio at Perugia; on the gothic vault of this room, in lunettes, are personified the seven planets; the spandrels of the arches are filled in with grotesque decorations well designed and of great variety; in some compartments they are on a gold ground and in others on a black ground.

About the beginning of the 16th century was introduced the external decoration of buildings with architectural perspectives and friezes of grotesques painted in chiaro-scuro. Baldassare Peruzzi was the originator of this style and he was followed by Polidoro da Caravaggio: both artists decorated the exteriors of many houses in Rome. At this day we see remains of their works in the old part of the city.

Morto da Feltro a pupil of Pinturicchio was the first artist who studied the antique mural decoration, which he imitated with great success in his works. At that time the Baths of Titus were not excavated, but remains of this style existed in many other localities,—in the Baths of Diocletian, and in the Coliseum at Rome; also in other parts of Italy,—at the Villa of Adrian near Tivoli, and at Pozzuolo and Baja near Naples. He came to Rome when young during the pontificate of Alexander VI., where he studied for some time those particular remains of antiquity. He remained also a long time at the Villa of Adrian, and

pursued his studies of these subjects even at Pozzuolo and Baja :* There are no works of this artist now existing. When in Florence he painted grotesques for Piero Soderini the gonfaloniere of that city in a room in his palace, but they were soon afterwards destroyed.

Most of these grotesque paintings have been long ago destroyed; none are now in existence except those of the Baths of Titus and of the Baths of Livia. Serlio gives a most extraordinary account of their destruction, affirming that after they had been copied they were destroyed by artists from an invidious feeling, but he does not name them for he says they were artists of celebrity living in his day.†

Giovanni da Udine, a pupil of Raphael, was the first artist who brought to perfection the painting of grotesques. At the death of Bramante in 1514 the architect to the Vatican Palace during the time of Leo X., the Loggie were unfinished; Raphael was then charged by the Pope with the superintendence of the building as architect, besides being the designer of the decorations of these Loggie. The care of the execution of the grotesques and ornaments he committed to G. da Udine, of whom Vasari speaks in such high praise as the first painter of animals of that day. In Raphael's Loggia he introduced into the decoration

* "Le Opere di Gio. Vasari," Vol. I. p. 630.

† "Et assai più se ne uederia, se la maligna e invida natura d'alcuni non le hauessino quaste e distrutte, per ciò che altri non hauesse a goder di quello, di che essi erano fatti copiosi, la patria e il nome dei quali uoglio tacere, che pur troppo sono noti fra qlli che di tali cose si son dilettrati a nostri tempi."—SERLIO, *Regole d'Architettura*, lib. iv. c. 11. Venezia, 1537.

paintings of various foreign animals which the Pope had in his menagerie. Many other artists assisted in this work the best among whom were Gio. Francesco, Pierino del Vaga, Polidoro da Caravaggio and others. About this time the subterranean chambers of the Baths of Titus were discovered, "full of grotesques, painted histories, small figures and stucco ornaments in basso-rilievo."* The beauty of these works was the admiration of Raphael and his scholar G. da Udine, the latter of whom devoted himself with enthusiasm to the study of them; he made numberless drawings of the ornaments, and particularly applied himself in attempting to discover the composition of the stucco ornaments, in which after many experiments he to a great extent succeeded. Many of the numerous pupils who were employed by Raphael in decorating the Vatican, left Rome upon the death of Leo X. and multiplied their works throughout Italy. In the works of his ablest scholar Giulio Romano, Raphaelesque decoration had reached the utmost degree of excellence to which it attained; his most excellent works are at the Villa Madama near Rome, and the Palazzo del T and the ducal palace at Mantua. The Loggia at the Villa Madama is the *chef-d'œuvre* of this school of art, in which the artist has conceived in a true spirit those principles which gave harmony and simplicity to the works of the ancients. There is however some uncertainty whether to Raphael or G. Romano is to be assigned the credit of the authorship of this work: Raphael gave designs for the Villa Madama for the then Cardinal de' Medici; but some years after his death

* Vasari, Vol. II. p. 897.

when that Cardinal became Pontiff under the title of Clement VII., the decorations of this Loggia were executed by G. Romano and G. da Udine. After this period we remark the rapid decline of this art in those parts of the Loggia of the Vatican, which after the death of Raphael being left unfinished on account of the unsettled political state of the times, were completed during the pontificate of Gregory XIII., the execution of the work being committed to Cristofano Roncalli under the direction of the Padre Ignazio Danti.*

Although Vasari says that there were some artists before Raphael, amongst whom he particularly mentions M. da Feltro, who studied the antique mural decorations of the Romans and successfully imitated their grotesques, yet it seems that their efforts were confined merely to copying those works which they did not appreciate, considering them rather as a great magazine of detail from whence they drew material to enrich their own works. There is no indication that they carried out in their works those principles which guided the ancients in their combinations. Raphael was the first artist whose mind seized upon the spirit of these works : in his designs we see the first evidences of a conception of the true principles of the antique mural decoration. In his great work of the Loggia of the Vatican are brought together all that variety of material and that fanciful imagery embodied in the same forms as in the decorations of the Baths of Titus. From such a motley mass of ornament as the two styles present it would be tedious to compare the resemblance

* Taja, "Descrizione del Pal. Apostolico Vaticano," 12mo, p. 132. Roma, 1750.

between individual parts, as in the representation of architectural perspectives, in the small tablets and lunettes with small figures and heads on coloured grounds, and altogether in the exuberant variety displayed in the forms of the foliage. There is a wide difference however between the principle of his application of the resources which Raphael in his design of this Loggia drew from the Baths of Titus and that by which the ancients, separating and disentangling that crowd of ornament and assigning to each part its due place and relative proportion, enabled the mind to comprehend without fatigue the whole composition. In the chambers of the Baths of Titus as in most others which were decorated in that style there were no architectural projecting lines, excepting a horizontal cornice at the springing of the vault. From the non-intervention of these obstacles the continuity of the design was preserved, and the whole of one side of a room or the vault of a ceiling presented one clear unbroken surface. The contrary to this is the position of the Loggia, which presents numberless vertical lines in its pilasters, counter-pilasters, panels and windows; each of these containing its own ornament distinct and dissimilar to the rest, creates a confusion and want of unity in the design. A disagreeable effect is thus produced upon the mind by the violent transitions which the eye makes from one pilaster to another, disconnected as they are by the dissimilarity of their ornaments.

In the centre of the vaulted ceilings of the Baths of Titus was generally a painting, in which were personified scenes from the fabulous world; this was a central point to which all other parts were kept subordinate: coloured bands on which ornament was

painted conduct the eye without fatigue to the different parts of the composition. The ceiling of the Loggia of the Villa Madama is an exemplification of these principles, in which no part obtrudes itself before another, but all are balanced with a great nicety.

The ancients thus generally observed the rule of carrying out some leading unbroken lines both vertically and horizontally, which tended to prevent confusion and gave clearness and intelligibility to the design. The vertical lines were composed of a variety of ornaments placed perpendicularly one over another: this rule it will be seen has been recognised in the ceiling Plate No. I., where the vertical line commences at the springing of the vault with a figure terminating in foliage and finishes at the top with a vase and flowers. But in the same ceiling a principle is not observed which was always attended to in ancient decoration; this was the keeping the foliage and figures in their proper relative proportions: the parts which compose the scroll at the bottom of the ceiling are of an undue size in proportion to the ornaments on the upper part, the half figure in connexion with it is consequently too large.

Gold, at first sparingly employed, was entirely omitted in the later works of Raphaelesque decoration: Taja, speaking of the second-floor loggia, says that gold was used chiefly as a ground to the stucco base-reliefs. Lanzi says that "those who saw it at an early period, when the unsullied splendour of the gold, the pure white of the stuccoes, the brilliancy of the colours, and the newness of the marble, rendered every part of it beautiful and resplendent, must have thought it a vision of Paradise." A great deal, however, of this exaggerated admiration must be the result of

imagination, for when Lanzi wrote these decorations were probably in nearly as dilapidated a state as they are at the present day. A close examination of the paintings on the upper part of the walls, which are in a comparatively fresh state, shews very few traces of gold. In the decorations of the first-floor loggia, Plate II., there is no gold traceable; the parts such as the rosettes in the centre of the coffers Plate III which would naturally have been gilded had any gold been used, are painted yellow. This is a great point of distinction between the Raphaelesque decoration and the works of the artists immediately preceding, as of P. Perugino and Pinturicchio, who as has already been observed employed a profusion of gold. Gold is not used in the decorations of the ceiling Plate I. This absence of gold is another mark of resemblance to the antique Roman decoration, in which gold if it formed a component part at all was very sparingly employed.

Concurrently with the decline of the fine arts generally this branch of art fell into neglect and has not since been revived in Italy with any success; to it succeeded what the Italians call the *barocco* style; we see it in most of the churches of Rome which have been *beautified* by their more modern decorations, coarse, heavy, and overloaded with gold.

DESCRIPTION TO PLATES.

PLATE I.

SHEWS a developement of one side of a coved ceiling in a room in the Farnese gardens at Rome. These gardens are upon the site of the ancient palace of the Cæsars : with the other property of the Farnese family which comprehends some of the finest monuments of modern Rome, this also has fallen into the possession of the royal family of Naples. The numerous ornamental buildings dispersed over the grounds, the extensive staircases, terraces and fountains, which once adorned this most delightful spot are now fast falling into a state of decay. The decorations of the chamber in which this ceiling is have suffered much from constant exposure to the external air, from the apertures of the door and window. It will be seen by the section that the cove of the ceiling is singularly large in proportion to the height of the room. The decorations which cover the whole of the surface of the walls and ceiling of this room are in character with those shewn in this plate; they are painted entirely on a white ground with the exception of the yellow ground at the groins and the red band at the springing of the arches. On each side of the room is a landscape in a situation corresponding to that of the one here shewn: on the flat surface in the centre of the ceiling is also a landscape enclosed in a frame of uncoloured stucco

mouldings. The spirit of these decorations bears the stamp of a later date than those of the Loggie of the Vatican: they have been spoken of in comparison with the antique in the previous sketch.

PLATE II.

Is a perspective view of one arm of the *primo ordine* or first floor of the Loggiato of the cortile of the palace of the Vatican: this cortile, enclosed on three sides by Loggie or Galleries four stories in height, is open on the south side fronting the Piazza of St. Peter. These Loggie, on one side open to the air, and enclosing a cortile, are common to most of the large Italian palaces; they serve as passages of communication on each floor, between the various parts of the building. The general architectural arrangement of this part of the Vatican palace is by Bramante, very little alteration having been made by Raphael in the plans of that architect after his death. This gallery and the one immediately over it on the second floor, which has been spoken of in the foregoing sketch, are the only two parts of the whole Loggiato which were decorated after the designs of Raphael. According to Vasari, G. da Udine was chief artist in the execution of the paintings in this Loggia. "Giovanni then proceeding with the work in the *primo ordine*, made the divisions of the stuccoes, the paintings and the vaulting, in a different manner to those of the *secondo ordine*; in the various cupolettas he painted vine-trellises loaded with grapes, jessamines, rose-trees, and orange-trees, with different sorts of birds and animals."*

* Vasari, "Le Opere," Vol. II. p. 898.

The character of the decorations of this gallery is very different to that of the one on the second floor, and in some respects it is superior to it. The ornament is here more sparingly employed there is not that indiscriminate mixture and want of proportion between the different parts, which creates so confusing an effect. The cupolettas have a greater simplicity of form than the coved ceilings of the upper Loggia.

The ornament is more simple and subservient to the architectural lines, as may be seen in the first cupoletta with the diamond-shaped coffers. In this gallery seems to have been attempted the first imitations in stucco of the coffers on the domes of the ancient Roman temples: the disposition of the diamond coffers on the first cupoletta is in imitation of a dome in the temple of Venus and Rome, the remains of which still exist. The seventh cupoletta though not distinctly visible in the perspective view, has coffers similar to those on the dome of the Pantheon, and of the many circular temples remains of which exist in and about Rome. On the second and third cupolettas are painted on a sky-blue ground, the vine-trellises and other plants and animals before-mentioned. As will be seen in the view, similarly painted ones intervene in pairs between others of an entirely different character of decoration: placed thus in juxtaposition, their dissimilarity produces a disagreeable effect. The apices of the cupolettas are variously ornamented with the arms of Leo X., masks and heads of animals.

The soffits of the arches (see Plate IX.) are subdivided by panels, the mouldings of which are not coloured; like the antique stucco mouldings they are of a very low relief. The panels are painted with variously coloured grounds, with figures, masks and heads

upon them; in some are figures of white stucco in basso-rilievo on green and blue grounds. The outside pilasters and those attached to the wall are the only parts which are not decorated. There are thirteen cupolettas or arcades in the length of this gallery, which is 210 feet long, and 13 feet 9 inches wide between the pilasters.

Almost immediately after the completion of the decorations of these two Loggia, they were most cruelly mutilated by the soldiery under the Duke of Bourbon during the sack of Rome in 1527. The original paintings on the inner wall of this Loggia as far upwards as the imposts of the arches seem to have been almost entirely obliterated, up to which point they have been restored, but with skill very inferior to that displayed in the painting of the cupolettas: the decorations on these, from the beauty of the execution, seem not to have been interfered with by subsequent restorations. The decorations of the upper gallery, after the almost complete destruction of the lower parts, have not been retouched; the outlines of the ornaments as they were traced upon the moist plaster, are in many parts the only vestiges that remain. The work of decorating the other galleries was then discontinued for some years, and was not completed until the time of the pontificate of Gregory XIII.

Notwithstanding the destruction which has been perpetrated upon these paintings with so unsparing a hand, enough remains to strike the beholder with admiration at the splendour of their *ensemble*. From the cortile below, the view of these open corridors decorated with so many fantastic forms and varieties of colour, appearing more vivid through the clear medium of a southern atmosphere, produces an effect gay and brilliant in the extreme.

PLATE III.

Shews a developement of a part of the first cupoletta (see Plate II.) drawn to a scale of five-eighths of an inch to a foot: the only parts decorated are the upper surface of the styles forming the divisions to the coffers, and the inner surface of the panels with rosettes in the centres.

PLATE IV.

Details shewing the panels and decorations of the above cupoletta to a large size.

PLATE V.

Is a developement of part of the fourth cupoletta (see Plate II.), drawn to a scale of five-eighths of an inch to a foot.

PLATE VI.

A developement of part of the tenth cupoletta drawn to the same scale; it is not distinctly visible in the perspective view, Plate II., on account of its distance from the point of sight. The idea of this decoration seems to have been taken from a ceiling in the Baths of Titus, which has similarly to this a combination of circles intersecting each other and bands of foliage meeting at the intersections.

PLATE VII.

Shews a detached piece of ornament drawn to one-third full size, taken from the semi-circular part of the wall with a red

ground, intersecting the first cupoletta. (See Plate II.) The decorations on these parts of the walls on account of their height from the floor, seem to have escaped the ravages which destroyed those on the lower parts; most of them seem to be a part of the original decorations.

PLATE VIII.

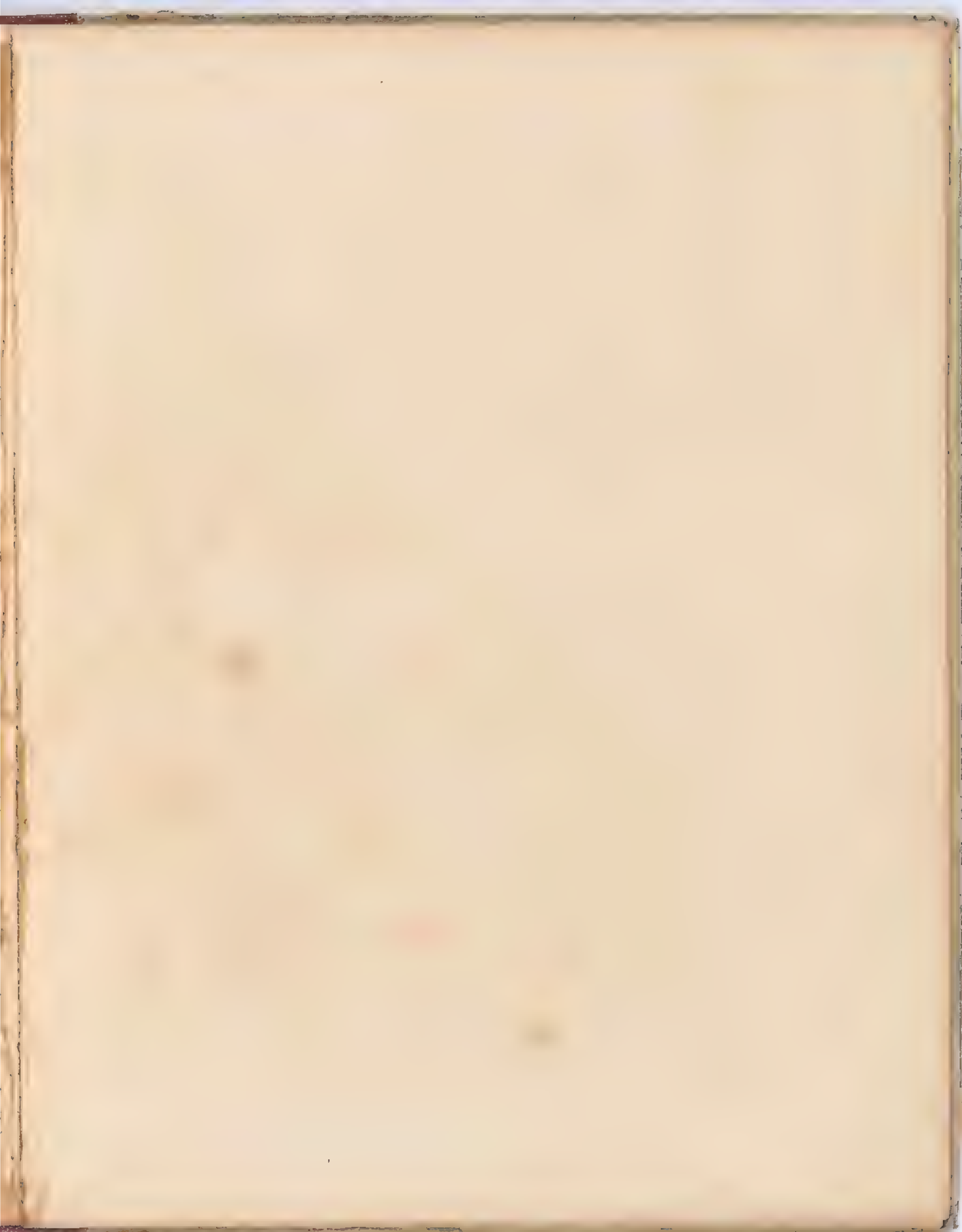
The larger ornament drawn to one-third full size is taken from the same position as that in Plate VII. The upper piece of ornament drawn to the same scale representing three honeysuckles, is from a panel in the soffit of one of the arches; its position may be seen in one of the figures in Plate IX.

PLATE IX.

Shews the developement of the soffits of the half of four arches with their imposts, drawn to a scale of five-eighths of an inch to a foot. All the soffits of the arches in this gallery are decorated in a similar manner.

PLATES X. and XI.

These ornaments drawn to one-half full size are from the counter-pilasters on the upper or second-floor Loggia: repeated with very little variation, they decorate the whole plain surface of the pilasters from the base to the capital. No two pilasters in this Loggia are decorated alike, so that it would be almost impossible in a work of colour to give an adequate idea of their varieties: but the forms are well known to the public from the various engravings.











Edessa. ADAS. P.





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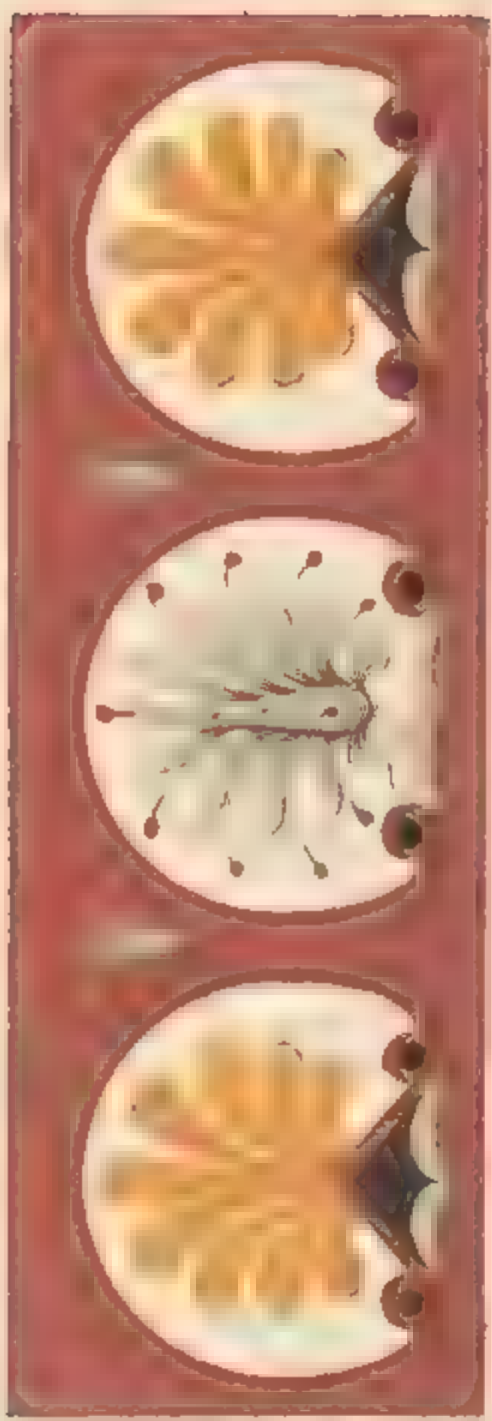






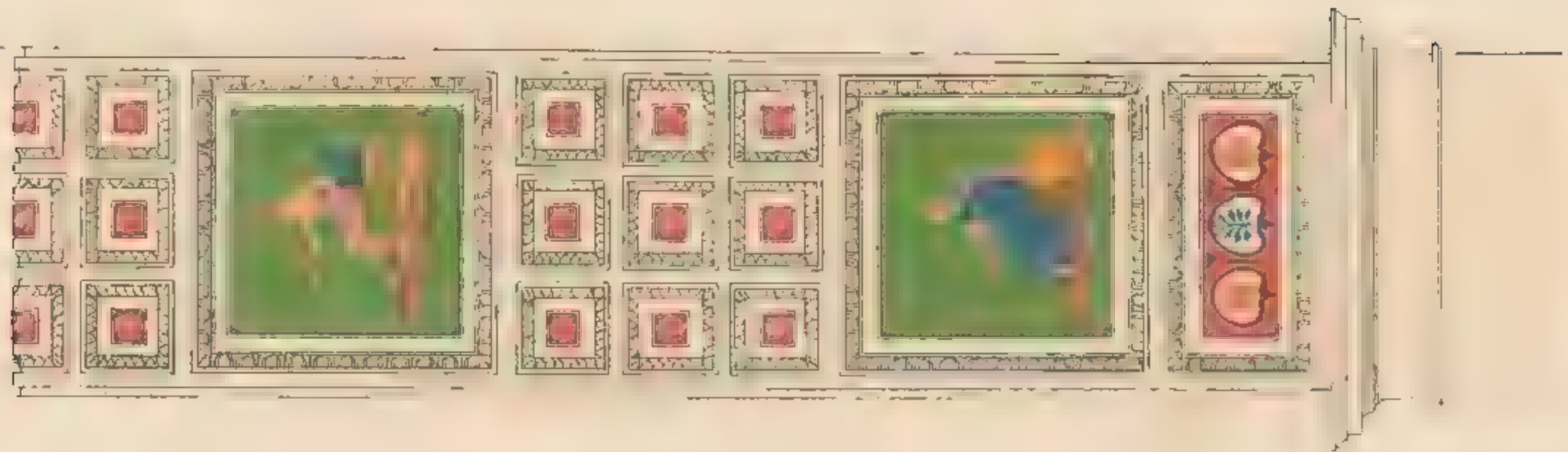
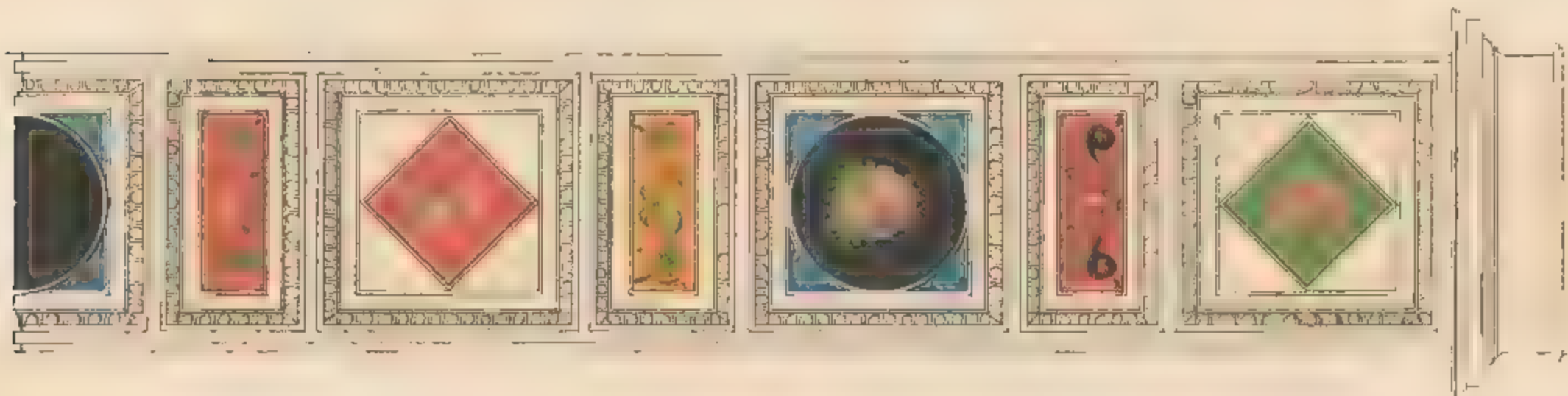
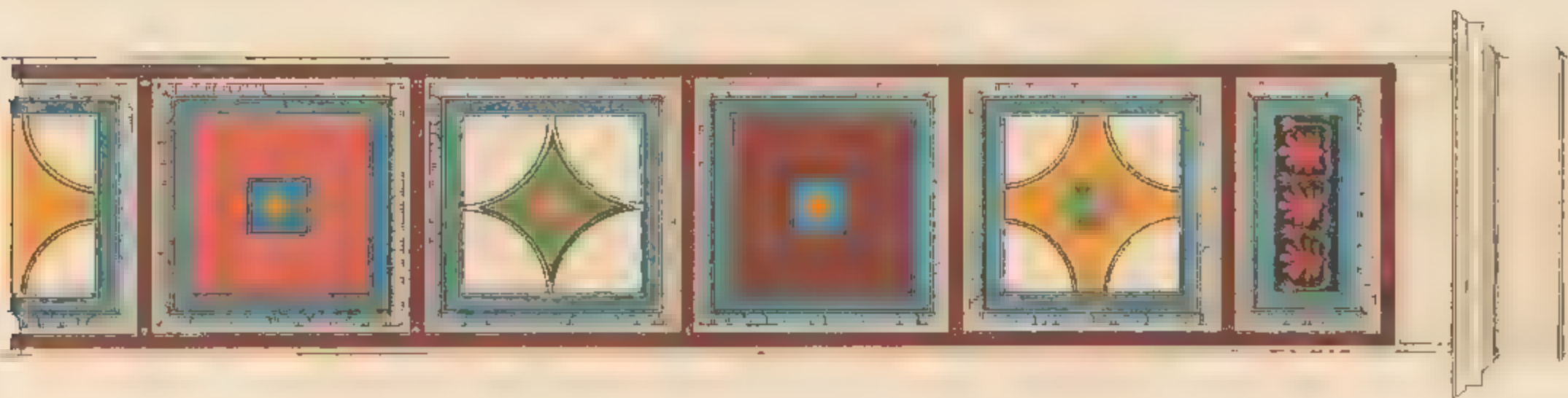
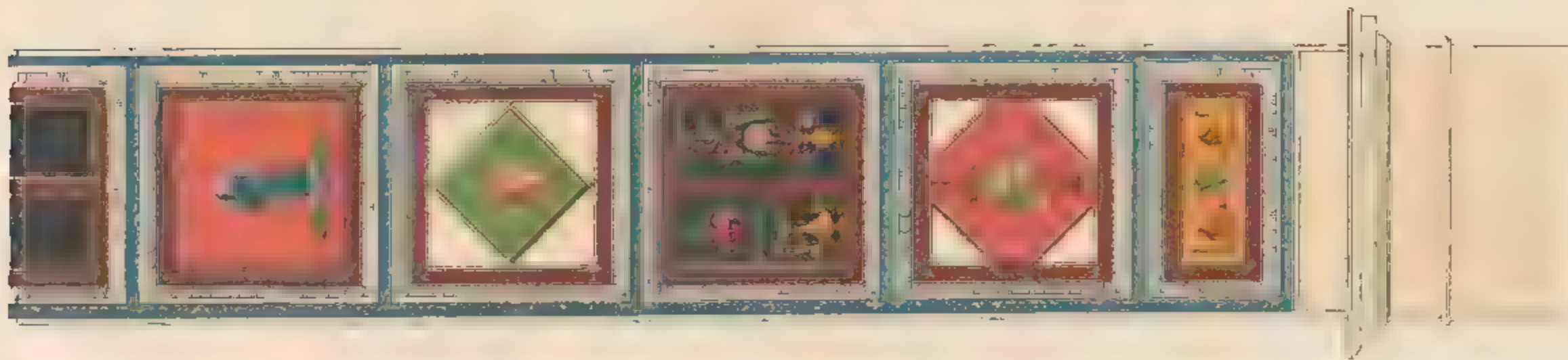














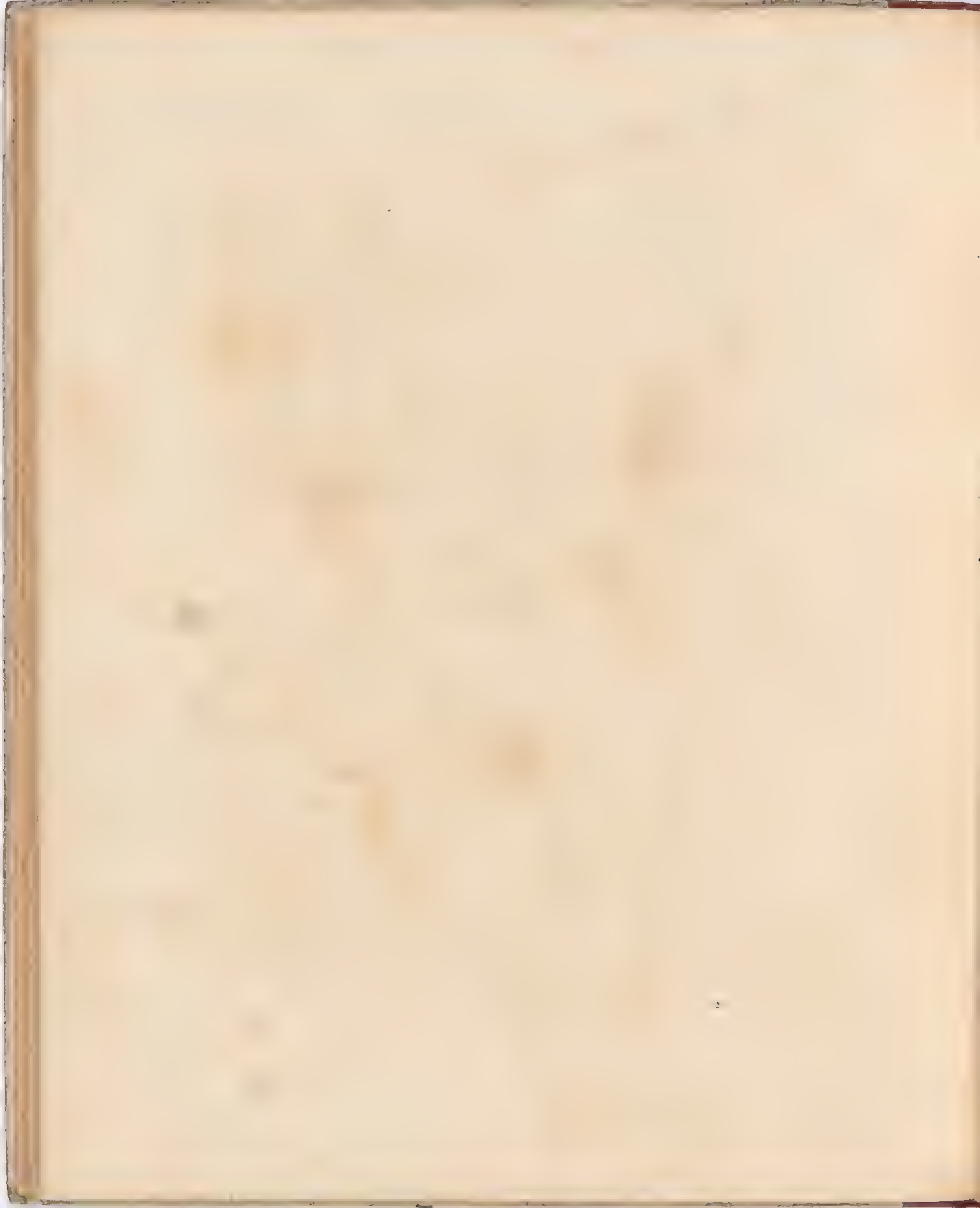


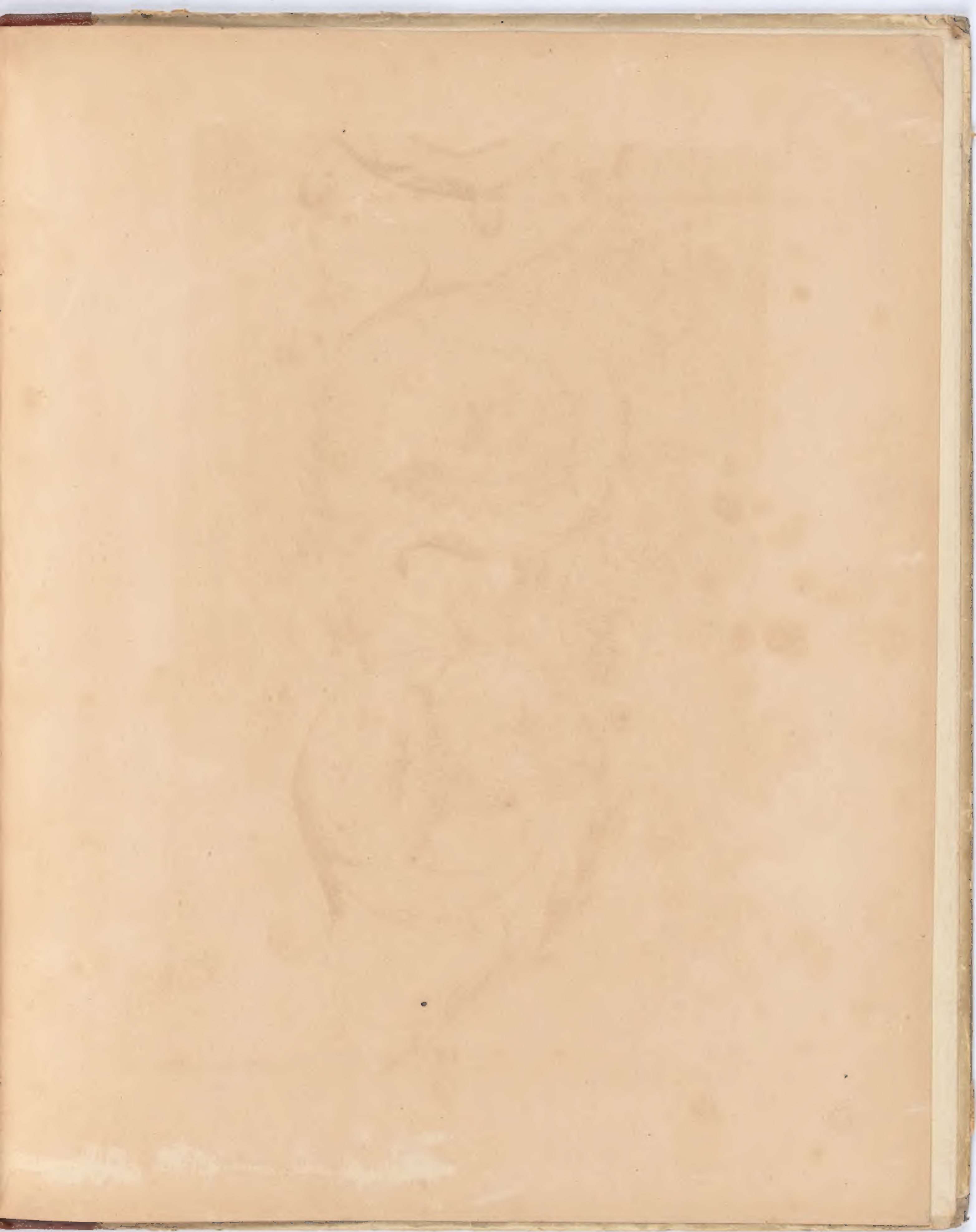


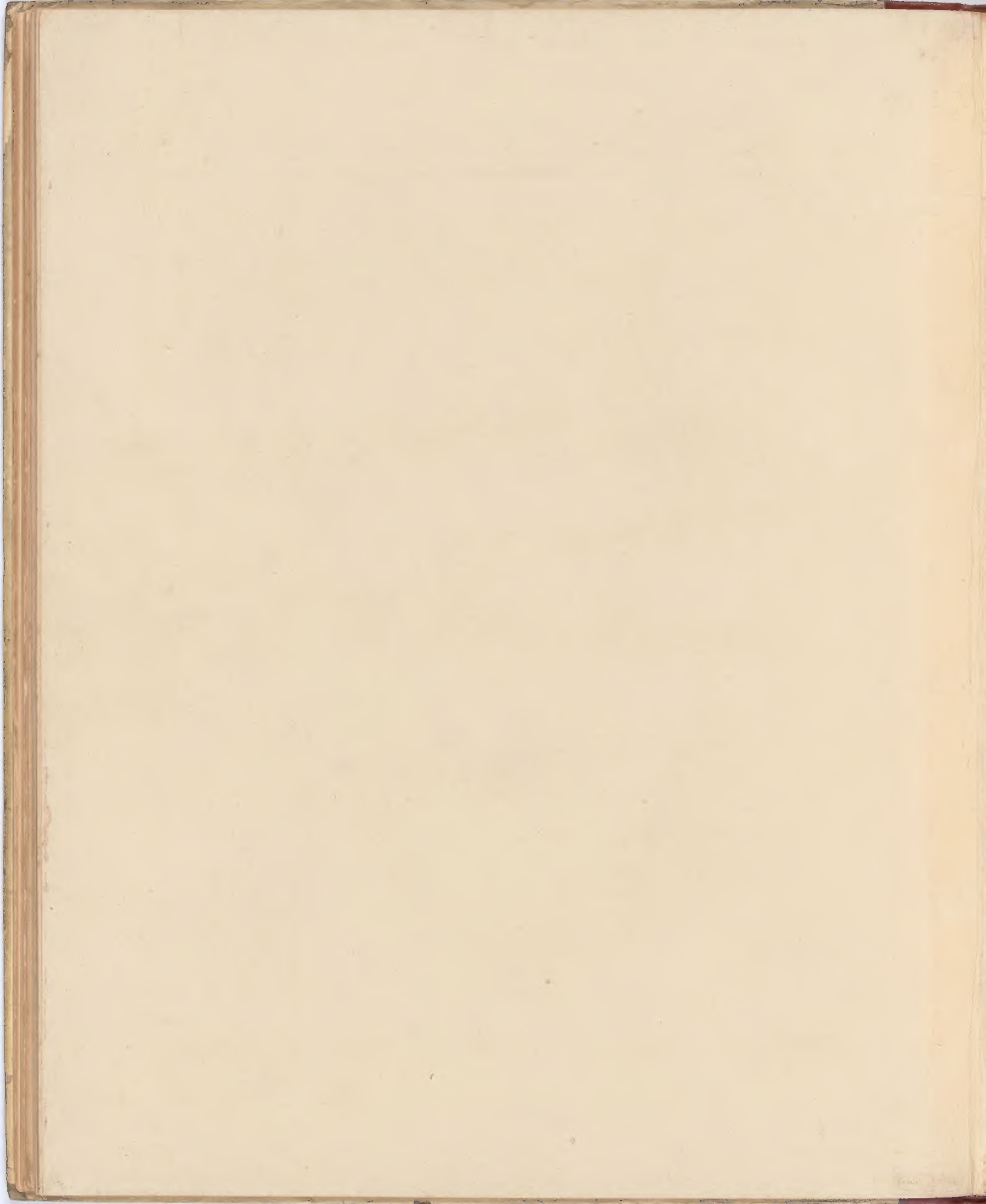












1806

HWS

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